

HERO OF THE HOTTENTOTS

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John Vanderkemp



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HERO OF THE HOTTENTOTS

(JOHN VANDERKEMP)

By

CECIL NORTHCOTT

Author of *My Friends the Cannibals*

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"True stories of real people"

JOHN VANDERKEMP

1747-1811

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HERO OF THE HOTTENTOTS

"KNOCK him down dead!" howled the crowd.

"Throw him into the canal!" shouted a man waving a large bunch of orange ribbons. "We don't want any traitors here." The crowd screamed and yelled round the tall man. Every time they pulled him to the ground he dragged one of the mob with him. He came up with his face streaming with blood and his clothes torn.

"Who is it?" cried the man waving the orange colours.

"Vanderkemp, the doctor," replied the crowd. "He's against the Prince!"

"That's a lie!" shouted Vanderkemp. "I am not against the Prince of Orange. I am a loyal Dutchman. But I am against all persecution and tyranny. You are all wrong in persecuting people who don't believe as you do. You've no right to smash up the houses of your opponents. . . ."

"Come on. Let's smash his house!" roared the crowd. Charging down the street, they came to Vanderkemp's house and began to smash his windows. "Hooray for the Prince of Orange!" they shouted as the bricks went through the glass.

"Where's Vanderkemp?"

"He's gone."

In the excitement of the attack, Vanderkemp had slipped into a friend's house and waited there until nightfall. When the street had been cleared by soldiers, the door of the house was opened cautiously and a thin, bowed old lady in a rusty black dress crept

out. She wore a wide straw hat, and underneath it gleamed two sharp, deep-set eyes. She had a long, straight nose and big chin, and looked anxiously up and down the street. Taking her stick she hobbled across the roadway. Her knees were bent with rheumatism, and she kept closely to the high, dark wall.

She listened. Middleburg was quiet. The mob had gone home.

"Tap, tap," her stick echoed down the quiet street. Along by the canal she crept in the darkness with the trees waving in the cold night air.

From behind a tree stepped two soldiers of the watch. "Whither away, madam, on such a night?"

"Only an old woman, sirs, going home from a sick grand-child."

"Let her go, corporal, let her go. More rogues than her in Middleburg."

"Are you for the Prince of Orange, madam?"

"Ay, sir. I love the Prince."

Hobbling across the canal bridge, the old lady stopped before a low shuttered house and knocked. An iron grill opened and a man whispered, "Who is it?"

"Give me shelter tonight," pleaded the old lady. "The mob are after me. My life is in danger."

The door opened, and the long black figure stood in the lighted hall. Slowly she drew herself up and threw off her hat.

"Why, it's Vanderkemp!" gasped his astonished friend. "I thought the mob had killed you!"

"Ah," laughed Vanderkemp, "I tricked them. I want to live to fight all such tyranny and oppression."

I

Forty years before this, John Vanderkemp was born, in 1747, in the old Dutch city of Rotterdam. His father was a minister in the Lutheran church, and he went to school dressed in the serge knickerbockers and short coat which Dutch boys wore. By the school ran the river Rhine, which in winter was often frozen over.

"Look at his long legs!" laughed his friends as he flew over the ice on wooden skates. "He always wins the skating prize."

But he was also "long in the head," as his schoolmaster told his father, Cornelius. So at sixteen John went up to Leyden University.

II

When he was thirty, Vanderkemp with his young wife had crossed to Britain; in Edinburgh Vanderkemp qualified as a doctor of medicine.

In 1782 he returned to Holland and began to practise in Middleburg. After nine years in this city he removed to Dordrecht. There he loved to sail his boat on the wide arm of the Rhine. One lovely June day in 1792 he took his wife and child up the river. The broad, flowing stream rolled on peacefully through the meadows.

"Look, John, the clouds," said his wife, pointing to the gathering storm.

"It's nothing, my dear," said Vanderkemp, "the clouds will pass."

The boat began to roll. Short, choppy waves splashed in midstream. Vanderkemp swung the tiller against the wind and ran down the little sail.

Suddenly from underneath the clouds a savage roar of wind struck the boat. A vast sheet of rain lashed across the river.

"Lie down in the bottom," shouted Vanderkemp to his wife and child. Lying on their faces, they felt the waves strike the boat, as she swirled downstream, throwing flying spray over them.

Crack, crack!

"The tiller's gone!" shouted Vanderkemp. "We're going—" Just as he said this a rush of wind caught the boat. Rudderless, in midstream, she went over.

Vanderkemp jumped just in time to catch his wife's clothes as, with the child in her arms, she went under. The rushing stream dragged them all down. They came up. But the child was gone. The frantic father dived again but failed to find her. His wife struggled in the waves and was slowly dragged down. Twice Van-

derkemp dived and held on to her. Cold and exhaustion made him lose his grip, and she sank. With a great effort Vanderkemp managed to reach the drifting boat and held grimly to the keel. There, when the rain storm passed, he was seen and rescued.

Lonely and broken-hearted, Vanderkemp shut himself up in his room. For many weeks he prayed daily for long hours, asking God to show him what he should do with his life. He opened the Bible and read the Psalms through, and then one day he read St. Paul's letter to the Romans. There he read the great apostle's word that the gospel was for all men everywhere.

"What will you give to me?" said a voice as he read.

"Give to Thee, Lord? Not a farthing, no, not the scraping of a fingernail. You know that I have not sought Thee. You fell upon me, as a highway robber comes up behind and unexpectedly knocks down a traveller on his way, and made Yourself master of me and demanded all from me, my soul and body, all that I had."

A little later he was tending wounded soldiers in a hospital in Ghent. They were lying in cold, damp cellars, and Vanderkemp moved among them between the beds carrying a lantern. Scrawled on the whitewashed wall in charcoal letters he saw this verse:

My Jesus reigns as Sovereign King
Within this dreary place;
Here has he caused my lips to sing,
And filled my heart with grace.

As the light of the lantern fell on the writing, Vanderkemp knew that God was again speaking to him, calling him into His service.

The final call came in a way that Vanderkemp little expected. He read a report sent to Holland of the founding of the London Missionary Society, in London, in 1795. The enthusiastic directors of the new society sent out a call for missionaries to take "the glorious gospel of the blessed God."

"It was to me," wrote Vanderkemp in his quaint way, "a wink from the Lord."

Falling on his knees in his Dordrecht study, he cried, "Here I am, Lord Jesus, to be spent in Thy service, according to Thy pleasure."

To see the thing to do was for Vanderkemp to act on it at once. He wrote to London and was invited to appear before the committee of the society there.

The directors were delighted with this new recruit and listened eagerly to the tale of his conversion, as with blazing eyes and sweeping gestures he told his story in fluent English. This handsome, soldier-like man of forty-eight was telling the Englishmen that he had been called, like St. Paul, to be a missionary. He was impetuous to be gone on the great adventure of taking the gospel to the coloured people of South Africa.

"Send me now," he said. "I want no salary or wages."

After a hurried return to Holland, the new missionary was farewelled with three others in December 1798, and sailed with them for the Cape of Good Hope in the convict ship *Hillsborough*.

III

Convict ship!

The *Hillsborough* sailed out from Portsmouth Harbour on Christmas Eve. Down below her water line were three hundred miserable men fettered in irons to the sides of the ship. They were bound for the convict colonies in Van Diemen's Land, Australia. As the ship rolled down the Channel and out into the Atlantic, the water leaked into the hold, soaking the men lying there. Their food was thrown to them down the hatchways, and only those whose chains were long enough to allow them to crawl could get the mildewed bread.

Through the wild Atlantic gales the convicts shivered in their ragged clothes, and planned mutiny. With a small file one of them sawed through his chains, and very soon half a dozen men were walking about the hold cursing the captain and threatening a murderous attack on the ship's company.

"They're getting out of hand, sir," reported the officer of the guard.

"Getting out of hand! Then shoot without mercy. I'll have no mutiny on my ship. Those convicts are worse than dogs."

More and more convicts broke loose from their chains, so that the captain ordered the guard to shoot the first man who put his head above the hatchways. Hearing this, Vanderkemp went to the captain and offered to go down and pacify the men.

"Pacify them, Mister Vanderkemp? It will take more than a missionary to do that."

"Well, sir, I'll try."

Down the stepladder, into the hold, he went. The hideous stench of the insanitary benches where the convicts lay made him feel sick. It was dark, and Vanderkemp knew that the men might fall on him and punch him to death. Through the darkness he could make out fifty or more white faces peering at him. Chains clanked and rattled, as the men strained to see their visitor.

"I am come as a friend," said Vanderkemp, "to help any who are ill."

Seeing he was unarmed, the convicts stood back and watched him walk into the black hold and pass by the long row of men lying under filthy blankets, shivering and muttering in their fever.

Horried by the foul conditions and filthy atmosphere, Vanderkemp determined to give up all his time to the service of the convicts. Day after day, and often at night, he lived in the convicts' hold. He listened patiently to stories of crime and cruelty. He taught many of the men to read and often held services for them. As the ship plunged through the Atlantic gales into the warm tropics the heat added to the unhealthy conditions. Thirty-six men died and were lowered over the side while Vanderkemp gave them Christian burial.

Among the living and dying, often standing in many feet of water in the hold, the soldier-missionary ministered to his friends. All plans of mutiny disappeared. The soldiers were taken off guard, and the captain admitted that the way of friendship

was better than the way of force. After fourteen weeks at sea, the *Hillsborough* sailed into Table Bay, and Vanderkemp saw his new home of South Africa where he was to live for the rest of his life.

IV

Cape Colony was then in the possession of the Dutch, though away from the coast and into the interior the Hottentots and Kaffirs lived on the land which had always belonged to them. But the white settlers were powerful and they included, besides Dutch, many English and French. There grew up a strong dislike between the white men and the black men, because the white men thought they were the most important people in the country and should own land on which the Kaffirs and the Hottentots should work as their servants. The black men were poor, uneducated and weak, and many of them were forced into slavery on the farms and big estates. Even in Cape Town itself Vanderkemp found over six thousand people whom he called slaves. Four times a week he preached to them, and with all his fiery, impetuous spirit he took up their cause against their oppressors.

"These unfortunate creatures," he wrote home to the London Missionary Society, "according to the wicked rule of this wretched country, are sold as beasts and separated from their children by monsters who call themselves Christians. I do not mean to insinuate that all the slaveholders are equally cruel in this abominable traffic, yet the best among them deprive the slaves of the slightest vestige of freedom."

Going about Cape Town, he saw the misery and unhappiness of the coloured people.

"Look, there is Massa Vanderkemp," shouted Hottentot children as he walked down the street.

"Massa Vanderkemp, he a good man," nodded wizened old men in the kraals. "He love all."

He stopped one day in a shady road to rest. The hot noon-day sun of Cape Town was oppressive, and he sat on the grassy edge

listening to the hum of the bees and the lazy swish of the palm leaves. Suddenly he heard crying and the whistle of a whip as it swung through the air. Jumping up, he ran into a garden and saw a sight which made his blood rise. There on the grass was lying a Hottentot boy and above him stood a big white man lashing the boy's shoulders with a long hide whip.

"Hi!" shouted Vanderkemp, running up. "Hold! You've no right to flog a boy in that merciless manner."

"Haven't I?" replied the man. "I'll show you," and the whip descended again.

"There you are. Get up," he shouted to the boy with a kick, and he ran off weeping piteously.

"That boy, sir," he said to Vanderkemp, "belongs to me and my estate. I can do with him as I like."

"Yes, but he's human," said Vanderkemp. "He belongs to the same family of God as you and I and you've no right to treat him in that cruel manner even if he has been disobedient."

"That's where you are wrong. God made some people black and some white, and the blacks are our slaves and servants. Look at them in Cape Town, the scum of the earth, thieves, scoundrels and always lazy. There's only one way of dealing with 'em," he said, shaking the whip, "and I'd advise you to keep clear of trouble."

Vanderkemp turned sorrowfully away.

He knew that legally the man was right and that the law must be changed before this cruelty could be stopped. He knew that there were thousands of unhappy Hottentots and Kaffirs throughout the land who wanted a friend and adviser, so he determined to set out on a long journey through the country to the wide-open lands where the Kaffirs still had liberty and where they still lived in their own way. He wanted to see them in their own country and bring them the Christian message.

His partner missionary, John Edmonds, wrote: "The worthy Dr. Vanderkemp was determined to attempt to go into Kaffirland tho' Heaven, Earth and Hell appeared to me to be all set against it He is a wonderful, uncommon man." "I say," wrote Ed-

monds, "as I always said, that I know no man that I would be upon a mission with sooner than Brother Vanderkemp."

V

Beyond the Great Fish River lived Gaika, King of the Kaffirs. To reach him Vanderkemp set out with a team of wagons from Cape Town in May 1799. "He goes to the land of our fathers," cried hundreds of Kaffir slaves as they pushed baskets of fruit into the wagons.

The long team of wagons drew out from Cape Town to the waving of hundreds of coloured handkerchiefs. Many Kaffirs saw in Vanderkemp another Moses going out to find a promised land, and the setting out of the ox wagons with the proud, stalwart figure of the Dutch missionary at their head was like the departure of the Children of Israel.

On the first wagon rode Bruntjie, a famous Hottentot elephant hunter, who acted as a guide and interpreter, and Edmonds, the missionary. Side by side with him Vanderkemp looked out on the open veldt across which the wagons slowly creaked their way. At nightfall they outspanned their oxen and within the great circle of wagons built their fires for warmth and to scare away beasts. The roar of lions often disturbed the travellers' sleep, and when Vanderkemp awoke he saw in the moonlight one of Bruntjie's men standing on guard with his spear ready for the attack.

The news of the pilgrimage spread across the veldt, and to the campfire at night little parties of Dutch Boer farmers came riding on their ponies from the kopjes and kloofs. To them Vanderkemp read the Bible and spoke in their own tongue.

"Why go on, Mister Vanderkemp?" said one to him. "Why not stay here and build a little church, and we will all come and listen and you shall be our minister? Why bother about these Hottentots? They are not worth it."

"Not worth it!" cried Vanderkemp. "Why, they belong to God as much as you do. The only difference is in the colour of their skin."

But more often there crept up to the missionary's campfire frightened little groups of Hottentots, who, risking the lions and the wolves that lay in their night tracks, came to see Vanderkemp.

"Tell us, master," said one Hottentot with his dark eyes glistening in the firelight, "tell us, is it true what the Boer farmers say?"

"What do they say, my friend?"

"They say their God never created *us*, nor takes any notice of *us*."

"No, it is not true, my friend. Tell him, Bruntjie," said Vanderkemp to the interpreter, "tell him that Christ is the Friend and Saviour of all. He makes no distinctions."

Creeping close to the Hottentot in the firelight, Vanderkemp held the man's rough, horny hand. Above the line of ox wagons the sky was filled with stars, and on the sleeping-blankets the night frost was sparkling. "Look, my friend. All men, Boer and Hottentot, farmer and slave, king and Kaffir, need the mercy of God. He is the Father of all men."

The old man seemed comforted as he left the circle of wagons to tramp home across the dark veldt. "Father," he said before he stepped into the darkness, "I will always remember these words, and I will go in all my distress to Jesus, and after I have settled my affairs with my master I will follow you into Kaffirland."

Nearer and nearer the line of wagons drew to the frontier of the Colony, from which raids from the camp of Gaika, King of the Kaffirs, were constantly descending. The beacon fires of the Kaffirs were lit on the mountaintops night after night, and the terrified colonists cowered behind their stockades.

A wild Kaffir raid meant death and pillage to many farms, and Vanderkemp was implored to stay in safety and help to keep off the raiders.

"I go to make friends with them," he said as he despatched two of his followers with a message to Gaika, the king.

The king sent a friendly message, and, what was more important, his tobacco-box as passport.

With the tobacco-box in his hand Vanderkemp crossed the

frontier into the land of the Kaffirs. Whenever a band of tribesmen came up with spears drawn he showed the king's box. Then the men would bow low in welcome to the travellers.

So, four months after leaving the Cape, Vanderkemp came to Gaika's headquarters. Carrying the tobacco-box as passport, he marched unafraid up to the kraal. "After we had waited about ten minutes in suspense," he writes, "the king approached in a majestic and solemn attitude, attended on each side by one of his chief men. He was covered with a long robe of panthers' skins, and wore a diadem of copper and another of beads around his head. He had in his hand an iron *kiri*, and his cheeks and lips were painted red. He stopped about twenty paces from us, and one of his captains then signified that it was the king. We then stepped towards him, and he at the same time marched forward. He reached us his right hand, but spoke not a word. I then delivered him his tobacco-box, which we had filled with buttons. He accepted it and gave it to one of his attendants. At a distance behind him stood his captains and women, in the form of a half-moon; and at a great distance the rest of the people. During all the time, he moved not an eyelid, nor changed the least feature in his countenance."

For a quarter of an hour Vanderkemp and the massive old king looked at each other in silence. In his hand the king held the tobacco-box full of buttons as the sign of friendship.

"Who are you to come to my country? We want no white men. They carry off and kill my people," said the king.

"Yes, your Majesty, that is true. But I come in the name of the King of kings, and want to be your friend."

Gaika's crown of copper flashed in the sun as he turned to his chiefs. The silent row of warriors nodded their heads. All along the ranks whispers passed.

"He is English . . . he will betray . . . let us kill him. . . ."

Vanderkemp, with the swiftness of a soldier, realized what was happening, and, rushing forward, seized the tobacco-box from the king's hands and held it up before the king and the chiefs.

"I am a friend. Give me a place to live. Give me a field for my oxen and wagons"

"Yes, yes!" shouted the chiefs, "the field by the river. Let them go there."

So that night Vanderkemp's wagons were drawn up by the river, and one of the first things he did before his tent was pitched was to look for ink and paper so that he could begin his journal. But the ink had been spilled on the journey and he had no pencil. No one for a hundred miles and more had ink. He pulled up a root which looked like a carrot and noticed that his knife stained it a deep black colour. So, taking a handful of nails and slices of the root, he mixed them with water and made his own ink. He wrote:

Brother Edmonds and I cut long grass into strips for thatching, and I cut trees in the wood. I kneeled down upon the grass, praying that from under the roof the seed of the Gospel might spread northwards to all Africa.

There the isolated visitors settled down to win the friendship of the Kaffirs. It was a hard, lonely job. Soon his partner left him and his interpreter went away. To the little thatched house Vanderkemp persuaded twelve naked Kaffir boys and girls to come to a day school, and outside the door he planted a tiny Dutch garden of lettuce, carrots, red currants, peaches, apricots and potatoes.

One day a deserter from the army came and told him that a plot was brewing to murder him, and that he must flee; but Vanderkemp held on. As he lay at night in his tent he heard the wolves sniffing at the stockade. Suspicions of poisoning and murder made the little party afraid, but the gallant heart of the missionary never gave way.

Coming home late one night from a kraal where he had been to visit a sick Kaffir, Vanderkemp was attacked by a pack of wolves. With nothing but his *kiri* stick, he faced the pack and dodged from kraal to kraal through the village until the barking of his own dogs drove off the fierce creatures.

Vanderkemp baptized a few Kaffirs in the river, but the continued suspicion of the king made his job very hard. So at the end of 1800 the missionary turned back and decided to work amongst the Kaffirs and the Hottentots within the colony where the white men had settled.

Trekking down to the township of Graaf Reinet, Vanderkemp again set up a house and school for the Hottentots, and soon had a large company to listen to him on Sundays. But again he was faced with opposition, this time from the Boer farmers who wanted as many Hottentots as possible to work cheaply on their farms, and disliked Vanderkemp's preaching and teaching.

Facing the Commissioner, Vanderkemp said boldly what he believed, that the Hottentots should be on an equal footing with the colonists, and that they should not be compelled against their wish to work on the farms, but, if they wished, should have land of their own.

That brought down on him the hatred of the farmers. For the second time the undaunted missionary set out with his ox wagons and tent, this time with scores of Hottentot followers, to find a safer dwelling place. For a hundred and sixty miles they trekked across the veldt, driving their sheep and cattle, and with black mothers and babies in the wagons, to another settlement at Bota's Place. Here again misfortune dogged them. The Dutch and English were at war, and Vanderkemp and his people were left to the mercy of the local chieftains who had seized the chance of conducting their own war. The local farmers egged them on to destroy the new missionary settlement.

"Black and white are not equal. Destroy this newcomer who dares to say they are!" cried the local farmers.

One day an excited Hottentot ran into Vanderkemp's hut.

"Massa, I have news. I hear farmers talking together."

"Well, what do you hear?" asked Vanderkemp calmly.

"I hear about fight. They collect rifles and bullets. They fight at night."

With the strategy of a commander Vanderkemp began to prepare for the attack.

The little community of Hottentots was panic-stricken. "We

die, we die," they cried. Mothers and babies huddled beneath the great wagons and wept.

Getting his people together, Vanderkemp said, "Let no one be afraid. God is on our side. We have nothing to fear. Let no one fire unless he is attacked. Keep quiet within the stockade."

As the night fell, Vanderkemp arranged his little settlement in order with the women and children in a protective shelter in the middle. All round the huts were drawn up the huge wagons in which they had travelled across the veldt.

The few men who could handle rifles were posted in the huts and underneath the wagons, but they had strict orders not to fire unless absolutely necessary. They waited. Through the darkness, they could hear the distant bellow of cattle. It came nearer and nearer, and behind them they could see, far out on the veldt, waving torches as the men behind urged on the terrified animals.

"Stampede, massa, stampede!" shouted a terrified Hottentot. "They come; listen!" He put his ear to the ground.

Thud, thud, thud sounded the cattle hoofs on the hard ground. The snorting and bellowing of the cattle grew louder, and above them the shouts of the attacking farmers.

"Shall we fire, massa?" asked the defenders, as the wild herd of cattle and men came nearer.

"No, wait," replied Vanderkemp.

Suddenly from behind the wild light of the torches and above the heads of the bellowing cattle came the crack of the farmers' rifles.

"Fire!" roared Vanderkemp.

The rifles spat out a stream of fire.

The cattle bellowed, the women and children screamed, as an answering volley shot over the settlement.

"Fire!" shouted Vanderkemp.

Again the courageous Hottentot riflemen fired, as the weird shots went up.

Between the spokes of a wagon wheel Vanderkemp watched the confusion of the farmers and their cattle. The torches began scattering over the veldt and the cattle became more terrified.

"They run, massa," shouted a man in his ear. "Shall we fire again?"

"No," said Vanderkemp quietly. "God hath scattered his enemies." Vanderkemp knelt under the great wagon and prayed.

But he knew they could not stay in that district. No farmer would be his friend, and give work to the Hottentots. They must trek again.

VI

The brave, tired man again got out his wagons and oxen and trekked across the veldt to a lonely spot called Bethelsdorp. Here he was allowed to settle with the valiant company of black people whom he now called his children. The land was hard and difficult to cultivate, the water was salt and almost undrinkable, and Vanderkemp knew that his little community would have a fight to live. But he was determined to show the white colonists, the Boer farmers and the Government that the Hottentots in their own land could be hard workers, intelligent and good citizens.

They had scarcely any seed for sowing, as the Boer farmers refused to sell any, and when they did get some the land was so hard and brackish that the harvest was pitiably small. The Hottentots quickly ran up their flimsy thatch houses and erected a church in the form of a cross. Figs, peaches and pomegranates were planted, and soon the little settlement began to shape itself. Many fugitive slaves came to it for protection, cruelly-used servants asked for a home, and the name of Bethelsdorp became a shining hope of the Hottentot people as well as a hated place for the colonists and farmers.

Evening worship in the thatched church was the chief event of the settlement. After a day's work in the hot sun, the community would gather by the light of the candles while Vanderkemp spoke to them of the Great Master who loves all men.

Sometimes they sat round long wooden tables in the church just like a large family. Vanderkemp liked to think of himself as father of his Hottentots and sat at the head of the table to read from the Bible.

There was no bread in Bethelsdorp for months at a time, so the Lord's Supper was celebrated in a preparation of dried peas and a little wine. As Vanderkemp walked barefoot on the dried mud floor of the church, giving out the sacred symbols and speaking of the love of the Lord Jesus for all men, he looked down upon the bare, scarred backs of men and women who had been flogged by their masters.

Vanderkemp knew the faults of his black friends; laziness was one of them. Writing to London, he said:

Laziness is the most prevalent evil among our people which exposes them to the greatest distresses. Some, however, are willing to work if one could employ them; this we cannot do, not having been able for more than a year to get any money from the Cape, so that we cannot pay them for their labour.

But Vanderkemp, and the other missionaries who came to help him, kept on. There were soon 1150 people living at Bethelsdorp, and over the plain were scattered 140 houses, with 2206 black cattle, 422 sheep and goats, 17 horses and many pigs and poultry. Twenty of the men owned wagons and carried goods through the district. Others were taught lime-burning, charcoal-burning, soap-boiling, fishing, smith's work and the repairing of wagons. Women made mats and baskets, and from the large salt pan thousands of bushels of salt were sold to towns in Cape Colony. Vanderkemp's word was coming true. The Hottentots could work well when treated well, and they were men and women worthy of trust and respect.

Some of the most trusted men went out as managers to local farmers and carried the message of Bethelsdorp to other districts. Many of them had been won from drunkenness and bad living, and Vanderkemp saw them go out as missionaries to their own people with great joy. "In my eyes," he said, "they are valiant champions, but without swords."

Two of them, Jocham and Abraham, carried the story of Christ to Hottentots near the frontier. They had been great buf-

falo and elephant hunters, and people from the kraals flocked to hear them. But the Boer farmers came to one meeting and carried off the two preachers, tied them to trees and flogged them, and then shut them in cages in the heat of the sun. Standing outside the cages they flung taunts at them: "You must not teach our people any more. We do not want them to hear your doctrine. Black is black and white is white."

They came back to Vanderkemp disheartened and depressed. "Master, they no want us black men. We are pigs and oxen. They hate us."

"Yes, Jocham. I know they hate you. But at least I am here as the friend of the African. I believe in you and we will struggle on together."

VII

During all the years at Bethelsdorp, Vanderkemp received no salary from home. He used his own money and refused to take any from the funds of the Missionary Society. But the opposition to his schemes increased. The Dutch Government refused to allow writing to be taught in the school, thinking that to be able to write would make the Hottentots feel themselves too important. They opposed a library and set every obstacle they could to Vanderkemp's plans. His patience was wearing thin, and at times he acted unwisely and was impetuous, but everything he did was for the sake of his black friends. Day after day stories of cruelty and inhuman treatment were brought to him, and his continued protests to the local authorities made him hated and distrusted.

One morning, he was told, Dr. Milton, belonging to the Regiment at Algoa Bay, went out for a walk and had not gone far before he heard piteous cries for mercy. He rushed into a plantation and there saw a young Boer farmer inhumanly beating a little Hottentot boy. The blows rained down upon the lad as he crouched on the ground.

"Hold!" cried the doctor.

"What's it to do with you, may I ask?" replied the farmer.

He kicked the boy in the stomach and again went on beating him.

Running up to the brute, the doctor pushed him to the ground and the coward ran off.

When Vanderkemp heard of this and other floggings and cruelties he wrote to the local officer:

Such outrages call loudly to Heaven for justice. I doubt not but you will penetrate the necessity of putting a stop to these and similar excesses which, being left unpunished, daily increase in number and atrocity, and render this country an execration to every stranger in whom the last spark of humanity is not yet entirely extinguished.

This did not please the local officer, who threatened Vanderkemp that he would continue to punish any Hottentots found wandering or away from their farms. This meant that those living at Bethelsdorp were afraid to leave the settlement except in company with Vanderkemp or one of the other missionaries. To keep up their spirits Vanderkemp went off on long tours in the district.

One day he saddled his horse to visit the outlying kraals. "Come on, my beauty," he whispered to his horse, "at least you don't change much."

He laid his face on the warm, silky neck of his horse and wearily thought of the long fight for the rights of his people. Tightening the saddle-girths and throwing a sack of meal in front of him, he mounted and rode down through the settlement.

"There goes the master—always restless, always riding somewhere," said the Hottentots as they watched him from the fields.

"He do look handsome, though," said one woman, shading her eyes from the sun as the rider passed, sitting well on his horse. His straight, soldierly figure was in an old, faded, black suit against which his white cravat and collar showed up in the bright light. The men and women stood and watched him pass into the open veldt, across the dried-up river bed where his horse's hoofs threw up little clouds of dust.

As the horse trotted leisurely on, Vanderkemp threw the reins down and took out from his pocket a little book, worn and tattered. It was a Greek New Testament, and he began to read:

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

"That's it," he murmured to himself, "that is my commission. That means Hottentots as well as white farmers. Gee up, my beauty."

Coming up to the bank of the river he saw far ahead on the veldt, nestling in a group of trees, a kraal. Switching his horse forward, Vanderkemp came into the yard of the kraal. Lying in one corner was a naked child asleep. Filth and refuse covered the mud floor, and looking into the hut he could see no one.

"Hullo," he shouted, "anyone at home?" There was no answer.

Walking round the kraal, Vanderkemp found three men lying drunk in the very hut which should have been the place for a meeting, and in the corner cowered their three wives, too frightened to speak.

A drunken orgy, which too often ruined the Hottentots, had taken place. The missionary turned his horse out of the kraal across the veldt, feeling sad at heart. How much had been done for them and how little they did for his Master!

Through the early evening he rode on to the next kraal. Here the children ran out to meet him.

"It's massa missionary, massa missionary!" they cried. "He's come."

A smiling, brawny Hottentot ran out to take the horse and then led Vanderkemp into a small hut where eighty people were packed. They sat squeezed together on the floor while Vanderkemp stood in the doorway and read to them out of his Bible and spoke of the love of God to all men. As he fell asleep that night with his single blanket round him and his head on the saddle-

bag for a pillow, he whispered to himself, "They do care, they do care after all."

But over all the district the oppressions and cruelties continued, until at last Vanderkemp could stand it no longer. He and another missionary rode off to Cape Town to lay their complaints before the Governor. They knew they were doing a risky thing, because many of the poor Hottentots, whose cause they championed, were afraid to give evidence of the wrongs done to them.

Vanderkemp and his friend produced evidence of over one hundred murders which they said had been committed among the Hottentots by farmers on the veldt. But when the long judicial inquiry, called "the Black Circuit," was over, this number was reduced to seventeen.

It looked as though Vanderkemp's word was discredited. What he had hoped for as a great vindication of his poor Hottentots was turned into a farce. In the country districts the evidence of the frightened Hottentots was doubted, and very often the word of the white farmer was preferred.

He was heartbroken.

"But, massa, you have done a lot," said an old Hottentot to him one day in Cape Town.

"What have I done? I have failed. The Hottentots are not free. The white men hate them and they hate me."

"No, massa. We love you. You have shown us the true love of God. You have shown us not to hate our cruel masters, but to serve them well. You have shown us how to live well, so that one day our children will be free and no longer slaves."

"Ah, that will be a long time, my friend."

"Perhaps not so long, massa. Because people talk of you in the great London and everywhere. You are known as the friend of the black man, and what you say the great one listens to."

"Ah, yes, they listen, but don't act," replied Vanderkemp bitterly.

"But, master, there is no more slave trading, no more kidnapping between our country and America, and soon, say the great friends in London, all slaves will be free wherever the British flag flies."

"It will be a long time before all are free," answered Vanderkemp, and buried his face in his hands.

From this gloomy frame of mind Vanderkemp was roused by the earthquake of 1811 which shook Cape Town on June 7th.

A terrific rush of wind was followed by the quaking of the ground as people in the streets watched rows of houses sway like trees. The walls of the room in which Vanderkemp was fell outwards and chimneys crashed through the roof of his house. His friends rushed into his room and found him quietly reading the Book of Psalms. It was open at Psalm 91:

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. . . . Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day.

He got up slowly and without excitement and walked into the street where hundreds of frightened Hottentots were rushing madly, dragging their children and possessions. The sight of the calm Vanderkemp prevented a panic.

VIII

Within a few months he was ill. The long toil of eleven years on the veldt had worn him out, but much more had the nervous strain of the struggle sapped his strength.

His strong, handsome face grew thin and worn. He knew that he had come to an end of his trek and adventures. Sitting in his little room in Cape Town, he was visited by many Hottentots.

"Master Vanderkemp," said one, "I come from many who have never seen you. But they know about you. You have been our friend. You have fought for us and spoken for us. We poor black Hottentots are grateful."

The news of his illness spread up through the country. In lonely kraals and villages they talked of this tall, handsome man who had come to tell them of the love of God.

"He cared for us, he cared for us," sobbed one woman on the stairs leading to his room, "and now he will be with us no more."

"Massa Vanderkemp," said another, "he is God's man. He come to us from God. He go to God. He protected by God."

At his own village of Bethelsdorp, still struggling bravely in the wilderness, the whole population met to weep and remember him who was their master.

The news from Bethelsdorp cheered him up. His eye glistened and he felt again the thrill of the open veldt.

One day two tall soldiers of the Guard came to see him as he lay in bed. They respected Vanderkemp for his bravery and because he had once been a soldier.

"Sir," they said, saluting him, "we honour a brave man, a true soldier of the King of kings. We shall not forget."

"All is well," Vanderkemp said to a friend.

"Is it light or darkness?" asked his friend.

"It is light," he whispered, and with those words passed on to the heavenly country.

Cape Town turned out in thousands to do him honour at his funeral. White men and black, military officers, ministers, missionaries, Hottentots and Kaffirs, those who hated and those who loved followed him to his grave. Those who hated him remembered that he cared for only one thing—a fair chance and justice for the black man. Those who loved him knew that they had lost a friend and a prophet.

Vanderkemp's name and work live on. For the struggle of black and white still goes on in Africa, but many of the injustices which Vanderkemp fought are gone. His courage and faith were not lost and the better lot of thousands of black people in South Africa today is due to the courage of men like Vanderkemp, who dared to act on the truths they believed.

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